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TONY P. HALL
THIRD DISTRICT, OHIO
COMMITTEE:
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RULES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON RULES OF THE HOUSE

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

1728 LONGWORTH HOUSE [illegible]
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515
(202) 225-6465

DISTRICT OFFICE:
501 FEDERAL BUILDING
200 WEST SECOND STREET
DAYTON, OHIO 45402
(513) 225-2843

April 6, 1984

Prime Minister Mario Soares
Presidencia do Conselho de Ministros
Rua da Imprensa
a Estrela
1200 Lisbon, Portugal

Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for the response you sent to me and to the other Members of the U. S. Congress concerning the plight of the people of East Timor. On behalf of those Representatives who had written to you, I want to express our appreciation for your kind comments and for your reassurances about the commitment of your Government to the well-being of the Timorese people. In particular, we are most pleased that Portugal will accept the relatives still in East Timor of those refugees who took the risk of sharing with the U. S. Congress their information about the situation in East Timor. We commend you for your efforts to advance these family reunifications.

I also wish to thank you for your appearance at the House Foreign Affairs Committee during your trip to the United States. I am grateful to have had the chance to raise the question of East Timor with you personally. My colleagues and I were glad to be informed about your own personal initiatives on East Timor with the Vatican and the United Nations. Your comments underscored similar expressions by President Antonio Ramalho Eanes during his appearance with U. S. Representatives last September concerning the Portuguese position on the fate of the people of East Timor.

In view of these most positive and friendly exchanges that you and President Eanes have had with the U. S. Congress, I was troubled and puzzled by the remarks attributed to Foreign Minister Jaime Gama in an article in The Washington Post of March 31, 1984. A copy of this article is enclosed.

As you will notice, his comments appear to contradict the statements made both by you and President Eanes. In your letter to me and the other Members of Congress who had written to you, you said: "I must say that I am deeply touched by the interest shown by dedicated representatives of the American people towards the sufferings of the people of Timor." However, Mr. Gama is quoted as accusing us of engaging in "political marketing that verges on the demagogic . . . and was of little value." You can appreciate our puzzlement and surprise that such a statement would be made by your Foreign Minister. We are unclear how to interpret this commentary.

Our motives in writing to you were to express our support for Portuguese efforts to secure the internationally-recognized rights of the people of East Timor and to advise you of our personal interest in efforts to reunite the families listed

in the letter who are technically citizens of Portugal. Our concern is for the plight of the Timorese people, and we wish to lend whatever support we can to international efforts on the Timor question. To this end, Members of Congress also have written to encourage Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke to pursue diplomatic initiatives relating to East Timor.

As you know, I initiated a letter to President Reagan, signed by 105 Members of Congress, concerning urgent issues relating to East Timor in the wake of renewed Indonesian military activity. In that letter, we urged President Reagan to "work with Portugal and Australia to develop creative policies to address the underlying causes of the ongoing human suffering in East Timor."

We intend to continue to work to bring about a reassessment of the current United States official policies with respect to East Timor. At the same time, we look forward to working with our allies, like Portugal, to bring justice to the people of East Timor. For this reason, we are confused by Foreign Minister Gama's statement and characterization of our work.

I would greatly appreciate any clarification you could offer that I could share with my colleagues, Mr. Prime Minister.

Let me convey to you, on behalf of the other concerned Members of Congress, our most sincere gratitude for your dialogue with us on the issue of East Timor.

Sincerely,

Tony P. Hall

Tony P. Hall
Member of Congress

TPH:msr
Enclosure (1)